

STATE OF WASHINGTON

## INDEPENDENT SCIENCE PANEL

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September 20, 2002

TO: William Ruckelshaus  
Monitoring Oversight Committee

FROM: Kenneth Currens, Chair 

**SUBJECT: Recommendations on Functions of the Proposed State Monitoring Council**

At the Monitoring Oversight Committee (MOC) meeting on September 13, 2002, you indicated that you would be interested in the ideas that the Independent Science Panel (ISP) might have on what the functions of the proposed state monitoring council might be. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on that proposal, recognizing that our role is to focus on science, and that this issue involves both science and policy considerations. At the ISP meeting on September 18, 2002, we discussed the question, and our initial reaction is outlined below.

We based our response in the context of the following assumptions:

- The council will provide a science-policy interface for monitoring, but will emphasize technical aspects and will provide interpretations and recommendations for policy decision-makers.
- The council will be part of the broader governance approach for salmon and watersheds.

We see a need for three different categories of actions, if a successful comprehensive monitoring strategy for watershed health and salmon recovery is to be implemented:

- Category 1: *Continuing the development* of the Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy (CMS) and Action Plan, as we recommended in our memorandum (September 13, 2002) to you;
- Category 2: Providing a *credible forum* for the analysis, interpretation, evaluation and communication of monitoring results; and
- Category 3: Serving as a *source of information* and technical expertise in the development and evaluation of adaptive management activities

Using a monitoring council to meet these needs clearly builds on the good work that the MOC has already done. To be effective, however, the monitoring council will require a careful balance of different qualities. To implement actions in the first category, many of which will require interagency cooperation and compromise, the monitoring council will need to be able to create incentives and have some form of authority for actions and related policy decisions. To implement the actions in the second category, the council will need independence from perceived agency or stakeholder agendas.

In the first category of actions, for example, are tasks such as identifying and adopting performance measures, further developing standardized protocols and experimental designs, and continuing the

development of protocols and coordination for sharing and accessing monitoring data. The legislature called for these in SSB 5637, but they were not fully developed in the CMS because of lack of time and incentive to overcome the technical, institutional, and interagency challenges. Given limited resources, a monitoring council will need the authority to prioritize how these will be developed and also create the incentives for these to actually happen.

In the second category of actions, in contrast, are tasks such as assuring that monitoring data are credible, analyzing and reporting on the monitoring results, and evaluating the scientific credibility of different monitoring programs. The tasks require that the efforts be: (1) rigorous in their attention to the quality of the data, (2) scientifically competent, and (3) free from the perception that they have a vested interest in the outcomes of the analyses. As scientists, our concern is that the policy role of a monitoring council, which may be required to continue development and implementation of the monitoring strategy as it evolves, does not hinder the credibility of the data—which is fundamentally important—or evaluations of the monitoring programs.

The third category of activities includes recommendation and review of needed adaptive management actions emerging from results of monitoring activities. Responsible agencies or groups can request assistance in interpretation and evaluation of monitoring data for revising management activities and in the design of revised monitoring activities to evaluate the success of the selected alternative management.

An additional function of a monitoring council that we believe will be very useful would be to encourage, facilitate, and perhaps perform analyses that integrate monitoring data across all sources of impacts (habitat, water, hatcheries, harvest, etc.). These are the most important analyses we face but they are also the most challenging and the least developed at this time. Because of the potential roles of a monitoring council as a clearinghouse for different kinds of data from different sources, in coordinating among disparate agencies with different objectives and expertise, and in maintaining an independent, scientifically credible perspective on monitoring, a council may be in a unique position to accomplish this very important task. We expect this issue will loom especially large in the months and years ahead.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on this issue. We are encouraged by the attention and careful consideration that the MOC and others are giving this issue, and we look forward to continuing our involvement in developing the monitoring strategy.

cc: Bruce Crawford